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## AN EXHIBITION OF CHILDREN'S WORK IN DESIGN

FROM the press of the Jewish Publication Society of America has recently come a book of stories, translated from the modern Hebrew writer, Judah Steinberg, and entitled *The Breakfast of the Birds*, which is illustrated with astonishing success by a child. This delightful innovation in the illustrating of children's books is a telling example of the unusually good work in design done by children from three to sixteen years of age under the instruction of Miss Deborah Kallen, who is connected with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. These drawings and other examples showing the same naïve charm and real appreciation of the principles of design have been shown in one of the class rooms of the Museum from March 25 to April 8.

Miss Kallen, in explaining her methods of teaching to a writer for the *Boston Transcript*, said: "The teaching of art anywhere should lead to an interest in and understanding of art. Its purpose should be education: social and ethical. By education in art I do not mean a knowledge of facts and incidents about works of art, assorted in the order of the date of their occurrence. That would be history, without art. By art education I mean training in a systematic and logical progression, in the underlying principles of the technical performance of works of art. No matter what the means of expression may be, such an education should give one at least a well-developed reasoning power within the bounds and limitations of the principles of art. Developing the power of reason together with experience in technical performance must lead to appreciation and æsthetic discrimination. This is the purpose of my work with children; to develop through the medium of the art of drawing and painting that sense of order which will enable them to discern and understand order in all works of art, whatever the means of expression. Children

quickly realize that all human thought, whether in language, in sounds, in shapes or words, is as important as the one thought which they themselves express. Through this system of thought they learn the causes that have induced other minds to create works of art."

Miss Kallen's instruction consists of three parts: pure design, story-telling design, and museum study. These she described as follows: "The children begin with the simplest and smallest form of expression, the dot; the straight line, the straight line with angle; the area, or 'spot.' Within these lines they create examples of harmony, balance and rhythm. I follow the belief that children should first speak a language and think in it, before they read it. When they have gained knowledge of these principles through the experience in performing them, they are taken to the Museum.

"The Museum study is rather different in character and purpose from the pure design. From pure design the children learn to think and speak in terms of lines, shapes and colors, while in the Museum they learn to read art. The Museum is the laboratory where they gain technical knowledge. In the studies made at the Museum they read and analyze 'the thoughts in lines, shapes and colors' that other human minds have thought. Thus, unconsciously, they are influenced by good precedents."

In the story-telling design, the purpose is to develop the child's natural pictorial imagination and to train his visual memory.

Another proof of the success of this method of teaching is the quality that is manifested in the drawings the children make from their own experience, where they depict the life around them. As all types of children are included in these classes, the subjects are very varied, from a memory scene in France to a coal line or sugar line, the settlement playground, the alley with its inevitable clothesline, and the more fortunate sports as sliding, skiing, and coasting.